

Work Session

December 8, 2009, 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Red Lion Inn, Yellowstone Room, 475 River Parkway

Members Present: Chair Donna Cosgrove and Commissioners Jake Cordova, Brent Dixon, Kurt Karst, Michelle Mallard, Jared Peterson, Leslie Polson, George Swaney, and Margaret Wimborne.

Members Absent: Commissioners Gary Mills and Paul Savidis.

Also Present: Planning Director Renée Magee, Assistant Planning Director Brad Cramer, Current Planner DaNiel Jose, Recorder Debra Petty, and approximately five interested citizens.

The meeting convened at 8:05 a.m. Cramer said the purpose of the work session is to discuss the creation of an R&D-1 (Research, Development & Education) Zone. He said comments are welcome by all in attendance but cautioned them to limit comments to the proposed zone and not the pending public hearing for the rezone.

Cramer listed the concerns brought out at the Planning Commission hearing and encouraged the Commission to comment on each item listed below:

- Accessory Buildings
- Outdoor Storage
- Landscaping
- Traffic/Noise/Odors
- Berms/Screening
- Allowed Uses

Cosgrove said the sorting out of the new zone from the pending proposal is crucial for the discussion. She said the ordinance change is tied to the land regardless of what happens with the proposal and will impact what happens in the future on other parcels. She requested staff address the reasons why an M-1 zone will not work in lieu of the proposed R&D-1 zone. Cramer said the existing R-3A zone does not allow for labs nor does the M-1 zone allow for open storage. The proposed zone is an attempt to allow both research labs and open storage while preserving the higher education campus-like setting.

Cramer reviewed the table with the Commission noting the following:

- The general characteristics provision of the R&D-1 zone differs from the M-1 zone in that R&D-1 does not allow manufacturing.
- General objectives of the proposed zone are higher education, research and development land uses rather broadening the tax base as in the M-1 zone.
- Permitted land uses do not include manufacturing, processing, assembly of materials, or airports but do include open storage related to research labs. M-1 requires enclosed storage.
- The 10 acre minimum requirement is for the initial zone whereas 30 acres is required for the M-1 zone. A zone smaller than 10-acres is not allowed. However, parcels less than 10 acres may tie into an existing R&D-1 zone.
- A traffic study may be required by the zoning administrator.

Dixon suggested dorms be listed as a permitted accessory use in the R&D-1 zone. Magee responded a dorm constructed and owned by the university is a higher education facility. Cramer confirmed for Polson, if the Commission approves the new zone, the general characteristics, objectives, and standards as noted in the table will be approved.

Cramer said open storage can be as much as 30% of the lot. Dixon questioned the need for open storage in the proposed zone as it is impossible to construct a berm large enough to screen large, multi-story buildings in a campus-like setting from open storage. Per the diagram, what he sees is an accessory office building supporting an open storage function, not open storage supporting a laboratory. Mr. Cook said a great deal of agricultural research is done in Moscow. It requires the use and storage of large equipment and bio-material accessory to their research buildings. He said storage adjacent to the lab is necessary to the process.

Dixon said bench-scale research does not require eight acres of open storage. To him it sounds like more of a proto-type facility. Mr. Cook said not every R&D facility will need 30% on-site open storage. The 30% determination was made by staff as the proposal did not limit open storage. Cramer said the limit was proposed to assure open storage is not the primary use of the lot. Dixon is concerned the open storage will be an agriculture function. Mr. Cook pointed out that the project is a 30 million dollar investment for specific scientific energy research.

In response to comments, Magee stated the ordinance provisions for storage of scrap were included in the handouts to show the requirements for screening. Scrap is generally stored for resale and is not allowed in the R&D-1 zone. Dixon suggested limiting the amount of allowed storage and, if necessary, granting a variance for additional storage. Magee said variances are not permitted for land use. If more outdoor storage is needed, I&M-1 can accommodate their needs. Approval of a conditional use permit is acceptable as long as criteria for approval are set. In response to Peterson, she said there is potential for a lawsuit if you do not base your decision on the criteria listed in the ordinance. She confirmed entry and drive aisles are calculated as part of the open storage.

Wimborne is concerned about the use of large trucks and equipment operating in a campus-like setting. Polson said her concern was the limited amount of landscaping, 20%, will not achieve a campus-like setting. Peterson stated Boyd Anderson, former commissioner, wants a minimum of 30% landscaping. Based on the aerial photos and personal experience, Dixon said Willowcreek with 17% or the least amount of landscaping is done in a way that gives the feeling of ample landscaping as opposed to the EROB site, 25%, that gives a parking lot like feel.

Peterson said developers often manipulate their landscaping to meet the bare minimum and not meet the intent of the zone in regard to continuous, functional landscaping. Landscaping should meet the intent of the zone. Dixon referred to the Willowcreek aerial and pointed out there is minimal landscaping along Fremont Avenue. It has all been pulled back along the building for those using the facility. Dixon questioned the definition of a park-like setting in relation to landscaping and whether the landscaping should be on the street or near the building. The issue is to maximize the little landscaping required.

Cosgrove said there is a good deal of discussion about real campuses such as Moscow where perimeter parking preserves a large sense of green space. This requires a person to walk one-half mile and, as such, a real traditional campus will never be achieved. This is an urban campus, and it is a hard sell to get someone to walk one-half mile to their building. It astonishes her at the number of people who will drive from Willowcreek to University Place for a meeting. It takes longer to get in your car and drive the perimeter than it does to walk across two parking lots. Cordova prefers the perimeter landscaping.

Peterson believes the solution is a hybrid campus as you cannot take all the landscaping from the street and place it next to the building. Provision must be made for a buffer from the sidewalk and the street for pedestrians and some landscaping around the building to preserve the campus-like setting. Swaney suggested their responsibility is to establish the basic concepts for the R&D-1 zone prior to presentation of the proposal. They need to determine if the landscaping is adequate or if additional provisions are needed for buffering.

Dixon said Oakridge National Laboratory, a research and development facility, consists of rows of buildings with parking next to the building. When upgraded, a quad of buildings was constructed around a green interior courtyard and the lesser types of research are done in these buildings. The more intensive research and development took place in satellite buildings on the perimeter of the site. He suggested the same concept for the R&D-1 zone.

When asked for a description of what a hybrid campus looks like, it was suggested it have a pedestrian friendly atmosphere, i.e. Washington State University, with landscaping along public ways. Cordova is in favor of the proposed new zone and believes the term “campus” is getting in the way of the zone. Polson said the purpose of the landscaping may be to make the open storage less offensive and the zone more presentable. Rather than the proposed 3-foot berm, Peterson wants a 6-foot berm for outdoor storage.

Dixon said there are three roads, Fremont, US 20, and North Boulevard, feeding the university. He suggested buffering the arterials but not the local roads. He is not sure why the interior development is of concern to the commission. He is opposed to the required setback of 30 feet with no parking as that is where all the landscaping will be placed. Cosgrove believes it is a mistake not to buffer a parking lot from a street citing the gateways to the city and the old Fred Meyer which are considered ugly. Dixon believes landscaping should be placed where it is more useful. Polson is concerned landscaping requirements for the new zone mesh with what is already in place.

Karst said consideration should be given to issues other than green such as the value of the land. He said only 60-70% of the available land is for the actual use and questioned whether the requirement of landscaping and the necessary water resources for maintenance are good planning practices.

The Commission was asked by Cramer if open storage is appropriate. Karst said, if the issue with open storage is lot coverage, you need to talk about issues bigger than storage. If the actual use is

the issue, then you talk about screening and berming. There is a belief R&D needs outdoor storage, so members suggested placing a limit on the outdoor storage for the zone and requiring a conditional use permit for any storage greater than the limit.

The Commission considered keeping the M-1 zone and requiring a conditional use permit when additional storage is required. This allows control of open storage and future uses by the Commission. After much discussion it was determined using the CUP with the M-1 zone is not feasible as there may be other M-1 zones in town where open storage is not desirable. The M-1 zone is in response to the need for a light industrial zone.

It is agreed open storage should be allowed for research functions but it is not certain if this means total screening from view or if there are other measures appropriate for different types of storage. Polson wishes some control over what is stored while Cosgrove is concerned with enforcement of what is stored. The new R&D-1 zone does not list allowed type of items to be stored. When open storage is established, all items will be allowed unlike allowing open storage in the M-1 zone with a conditional use permit.

Ultimately, the commission settled on a new R&D-1 zone due to undesirable uses allowed in the M-1 zone. The screening should be based on the size of the open storage, location within the parcel, line of sight at a distance from the storage such as 300 feet, and the height of storage related to height of screening. Storage must be related to a research lab function.

The intent of berming or screening is to protect adjacent uses from visual impact. If a building is going to be used to screen open storage, what is being stored must relate to the activity within the building. Forty acres of parking lot for a screen is not good enough. It is difficult to articulate appropriate screening for open storage. The hospital along Sunnyside has open storage screened with slatted chain link fencing that is not attractive or adequate. Polson said she wants a more professional appearance and appropriate screening could consist of berms, walls, or landscaping.

At the request of the Commission, staff will make modifications to the proposed R&D-1 zone. Cramer said the item will be considered by the Commission at the January 5, 2010 meeting. Cosgrove suggested a minimum of 20% landscaping and, if the open storage is greater than 10% of the lot, a conditional use permit should be required.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

Debra Petty, Recording Secretary